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ABSTRACT

Patterns in general comments from public testimony and proposed future indicators (PFIs) presented at the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) Regional Forums concerning recommendations by the six NEGP Resource Groups (RGPs) are outlined. The RGP recommendations focus on ways of measuring/monitoring the nation's/states' progress toward meeting the President's and governors' six national education goals. Between April 12 and May 17, 1991, eight governors conducted NEGP Regional Forums, during which NEGP RGP representatives presented their preliminary recommendations about each goal, heard public comments, and provided each RGP with feedback. The NEGP also held forums at the April meetings of two national organizations. PFIs for Goal 1 (readiness for school) include: a school entry form, a health screening form, and an in-school assessment profile. PFIs for Goal 2 (high school completion) include a national student data reporting system. PFIs for Goal 3 (student achievement and citizenship) include a national standards and student assessment system. PFIs for Goal 4 (science and mathematics) include: continued enhanced participation in the International Assessment of Educational Progress and the International Assessment of Educational Achievement, continued use of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and collection of data on policies and use of state curriculum and professional teaching standards. PFIs for Goal 5 (adult literacy and lifelong learning) include: strengthening and expanding use of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), creating target scores for NALS performance, and using data produced by the Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. PFIs for Goal 6 (safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools) include: continued use/expansion of the Monitoring the Future student survey for the National Institute of Drug Abuse and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, encouragement of good local data collection, and use of "super" indicators. (RLC)

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NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL

MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARD THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS:

PUBLIC TESTIMONY VOLUME 3

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SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY ON MEASURES FOR FUTURE PROGRESS REPORTS

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MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARD THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS:

PUBLIC TESTIMONY VOLUME 3

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY ON MEASURES FOR FUTURE PROGRESS REPORTS

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General Public Testimony

Patterns in General Comments from Public Testimony

There were two objectives to the National Education Goals Panel's outreach activities. The first was to collect testimony on the indicators to use in the Progress Report. The second was to hear what the public had to say about the National Education Goals.

Support for the Goals. Most people began their testimony by saying that they endorsed the goals. Even those who suggested amending the goals generally did so by seeking to add explicit mention of another constituency or program area that deserved attention.

Praise for Governors, the President, and Resource Groups. Those testifying expressed appreciation for the effort and investment in education the Governors and President are making, and for the technical merit of the Resource Group recommendations.

Goals and reports not enough. A recurring theme was that, however valuable the report, measuring progress alone will not improve education. The story was told of a rancher weighing his sheep for market. The man comes to one sheep that does not weigh enough and puts it aside. After a while he puts it back on the scale and is surprised to find that it weighs the same. Weighing alone is not enough; we also need to feed the sheep. The preponderance of public testimony addressed, either directly or indirectly, what needs to be done to reach the goals.

Goal-related programs that work. A former Governor's staffer began her testimony, "Governor, I want you to know I'm doing a good job" (in a new goals-related job.) She made explicit what was implicit in the majority of testimony: a plea to remember a variety of programs and professional constituencies doing things that they believe will help reach the goals, including most frequently the arts, foreign languages, health education and services, vocational education, and libraries. People wantd to talk more about how to achieve the goals than about how to measure them. They turned to the National Education Goals Panel in the absence of other goals-related infrastructure.

The arts and foreign languages. The most vocal and persistent constituency group to testify was the arts community, ranging from arts educators to business people. While not always specific in what they wanted the Panel to do, they were eloquent on the value of the arts. One looked around and said, "You all look so grim; the arts will bring you joy." Both the arts and foreign language advocates wanted these areas included in Goal 3 and were confident that assessment tools exist to measure their mastery.

Outcomes and inputs. There was substantial testimony expressing the tension between the notion of emphasizing outputs (educational results) and including inputs (programs, policies, and resources). Many testified in support of the emphasis on outputs as avoiding self-congratulation based on efforts made. Many others asked for the inclusion of 2

input data. Da.. Morris, president of the Colorado Education Association, said, "The purpose of assessment is not to see whether we achieve the national goals in education.... The purpose is to determine what information policymakers and educators need to meet the goals.... The panel's emphasis on results--divorced from any realistic discussion of what produces these results--may leave the public merely frustrated."

Funding. There is tension in the public attitude between the understanding that money is tight and the belief that it is nonetheless essential for reform. The result was not a request for massive spending but rather a pervasive skepticism about the probable effectiveness and even sincerity of the goals process.

Need for broad involvement. An enormous amount of testimony related to the need to gain deeper and broader involvement in education, ranging from more parent involvement in the lives of their children, to business involvement with schools, to coordinating health and human services with education, to involving teachers and taxpayers in the goals process, to coordinating state and federal government efforts. This was related to the almost universal emphasis upon concern for the "whole" child, which only a few felt conflicted with higher academic standards.

Accommodating diversity. While expressing a need for standard definitions, and appreciation for national goals and even standards, an enormous amount of testimony urged continuing sensitivity to varying forms of diversity, including disabilities, rural settings, racial/ethnic, cultural, and language backgrounds, learning styles and giftedness, religious concerns, and the needs and strengths of various role groups.

Maintaining local control. People advocated maintaining local control, in some instances as a valued tradition and in others as a necessary condition for site-based management and the empowerment of teachers, parents, and other local constituencies.

Teacher-related issues. There was repeated testimony regarding the need to secure teacher ownership of the goals and to provide them with better teacher preparation and professional development.

Purpose and audience of the report. People had a variety of ideas about what the Progress Report would be and who it was for. Some thought the purpose was to help schools improve; others thought that the purpose was to hold someone accountable for results; and still others thought the purpose was to inform and motivate the public. Some thought the audience should be parents and families; others, educators and the school governance structure; others, a broader community of taxpayers, business, and all human service delivery personnel. Some felt these various purposes and audiences could all be accommodated with one report; others did not.

Questions of definition. Testimony on almost every goal included the need to develop operational definitions of terms, especially "readiness," "dropout" and "graduation rate," "citizenship," and "literacy."

Public Testimony on Proposed Future Indicators: Goal 1, Readiness for School

Proposed Future Indicators: School Entry Form; Health Screening Form; and In-School Assessment Profile

The Resource Group for Goal 1 recommended future development of the following indicators:

1. ***A School Entry Form***. When a child begins school, parents or guardians would provide information about their child's background, including health status, language(s) spoken, household and family life, and pre-school experience. A small set of common questions would be reported and aggregated for the state and nation. Schools and districts could add other questions tailored to their local needs and circumstances.

2. ***A Health Screening Form***. Health exams would be administered to children entering school. The exam would include vision, hearing, immunization, and special disabilities. Results could be used both to refer individual children for needed services and to report aggregate data to the state and nation.

3. ***An In-school Assessment Profile*** with four components: a portfolio of the child's work during his/her first year in school, observations by both a teacher and parent or guardian, and an individual profile prepared one-on-one by another local professional regarding the child's physical well-being, emotional maturity, social confidence, language richness, and general knowledge.

Extent of Testimony

Goal 1 (on School Readiness) attracted more public testimony than any other goal except Goal 3 (on Student Achievement). This was true in both oral (72) and written (135) testimony. Broad consensus was expressed that success at Goal 1 underlies the success of all other goals.

There is a special sense of urgency and political will for communities to work on Goal 1. In accounting for school readiness, most people see children's readiness more as a responsibility of the family and community than of the children themselves. Testimony indicated a belief that the level of children's readiness for school was declining; that it was not the children's fault; and that failing to reverse this trend will have severe consequences for children and communities.

Support

Public testimony overwhelmingly supported defining and reporting children's readiness for school in terms of the five dimensions recommended by the Resource Group: physical well-being, emotional maturity, social confidence, language richness, and general knowledge. Some testimony expressed a specific preference for the use of these dimensions over specific academic (or pre-academic) competencies, such as knowing letter names and sounds, colors, or early reading.

Most of the testimony supported the proposed assessments. Testimony expressed support for the potential usefulness to schools of the kinds of data collection proposed, especially giving better health and background information about children to the schools and better health services to the children.

Many specifically supported the use of assessment procedures to expand opportunities and services available to children, and cautioned against the misuse of assessment results to track or screen students.

Concerns

Concern was expressed that information collected through the new readiness assessments would be misused in practice. Testimony warned that the results would inevitably be used to label some children "less ready;" screen children out of educational opportunities available to others; place children in tracks for which ostensibly special services would be offered but in practice low expectations would be held; and ultimately accelerate the speed with which the self-fulfilling prophecy of low achievement could operate.

Concern was expressed that the families of less ready children are already vulnerable or fragile organisms, and labeling the parents and children as deficient or failures when the children start school would be a mistake. Some observed that it would be difficult for illiterate (or poorly educated) parents to complete reports about their children in the ways proposed, to read or write what was requested on the school entry forms, or to benefit from receiving the information in a technically complex report.

Concern was also expressed about the cost of developing and administering the proposed assessment system. Some people commented that it would produce more "paperwork" for the teachers. Others feared it might result in an unfunded mandate to supply health services that some communities would have no budget or tax base to fund.

Confusion was expressed about the purpose of the proposed assessment. People inquired whether the proposed assessment system was intended to be administered to a sample of children for purposes of gathering representative data for a national report, or

administered to every child for purposes of better tailoring services to meet individual children's needs. Support was offered for developing the assessments if they involved sample of children, thus avoiding the costs, paperwork and the need for training involved in making the system universal.

Suggested Alternatives or Refinements

Suggested refinements of the proposed assessments of school readiness did not cluster around specific alternatives or issues. To some degree, suggestions reflected the specific interests of constituency groups who wanted the value of their services recognized.

Suggested new indicators included the following: (items for the school entry form): ask whether books are available in the home, whether children have library cards, and how often they use the library; make school entry forms bi-lingual; (items for the health screening form): ask the child's immunization history and risk for lead poisoning; ask whether and how long the child had been breast fed; (item for the in-school profile): indicate whether the child had access to and used the school library. Another suggestion was that, assuming the portfolio of student work would include a great deal of art work, teachers and parents be offered training in nurturing creativity.

Sample Comments and Quotations

- "Goals 1 and 6 reach way beyond education (rightly so). Educators, however, must not be the only ones held responsible (accountable) for achieving these goals. Family and community and other institutions (Religion, Business) should also have major roles in these. Any of the goals is a worthy "target," but all refer to a deteriorating American social "infrastructure" that must be addressed before educators will have much success with achieving them..."
(C. M. Achilles, High Point, NC)

- "I wish to commend the work of the resource group on goal number one and encourage the National Goals Panel to accept and enact its recommendations... The resource group recognized and spoke to the tendency in the United States to force "Academic Knowing" onto our children at earlier and earlier ages. I also share their concern that inappropriate assessment at an early age in itself puts our children at risk. It is important that any national assessment be in compliance with the Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice for 4- and 5-year olds developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children."
(Betty Price, Executive Director, State Arts Council of Oklahoma)

- "The issues relative to measuring readiness are complex. In 1990 the Southern Association on Children under Six recommended "a ban of the routine, mass use of standardized intelligence achievement readiness and developmental screening tests for young children through the age of eight." We are pleased that the interim report does not endorse standardized readiness testing as the procedure to measure school readiness. However, the child development profile could become a misused catch all-all for educators lacking understanding of child development practices to use inappropriate measures unless strong guidance is provided at the national level with regard to the use of appropriate instruments...

  "The disparity among educational levels of parents and/or guardians in this country (and cultural differences in child-rearing) must be addressed in the design of data collection instruments and in strategies for collection of data."
(Cathy Grace, Executive Director, Southern Association on Children Under Six)

- "Goal # 1 - Readiness - is the key to achieving the other five goals... We must realize that we can not get the children ready to learn without involving the parents of the child... The states and the local school boards need information, guidance, and funds to provide programs for the families as well as for the students."
(J. K. Williams, Arkansas School Boards Association)

- "(W)e now know that issues of local context and philosophy may be the most important determinants of whether a child is judged to be ready for school. The criteria for readiness are vastly different, even in schools from the same district... Given the forces outside children that shape readiness judgments, any program addressing the readiness issue should include attention to structural and social indicators that frame how communities understand children."
(M. Elizabeth Graue, University of Wisconsin-Madison)

- "I would like to express to you my deep appreciation for the thoughtfulness of the Resource Group... In particular, I agree with the Resource Group's statement that it is "time... to propose creative new ways to expand, rather than restrict, the opportunities for children... (A)pproaches that promote intellectual rigor for young children as opposed to academic formality should be included, to remind readers that developmentally-appropriate practices are interactive, personally relevant, and involve real materials, people and ideas... The work of Howard Gardner and others... could be used to design curriculum-relevant instruments that assist teachers in the identification of dominant intellectual strengths -- What Gardner calls "intelligences" and "frames of mind" -- enabling the redesign of programs based on children's needs. "
(Jennifer Van Deusen, Maine Department of Education)

- "The importance of language skills and the ability of the child to communicate should be measured... (in the In-School Assessment Profile)... The young child's eagerness to learn should not be thwarted with paper and pencil tests in the early, fragile exploratory experiences."
(B. Marie Byers, Maryland Association of Boards of Education)

- "In terms of the assessment of school readiness, we recommend that assessment for readiness occur throughout a student's education career, not just prior to the initiation of formal schooling, and that services to promote the students' to learn be provided. Students who come to school with emotional and social problems, regardless of age, may not be ready to take advantage of the education that our new schools of the future will provide. Therefore, the availability of psychological, social, health, and other forms of wrap-around services for our youth needs to be assessed and plans to provide these services developed as part of our nation's school agenda."
(Ronda C. Talley, American Psychological Association)

Public Testimony on Proposed Future Indicators: Goal 2, High School Completion

Proposed Future Indicators: National Student Data Reporting System

Interim Improvements:
Enhance the Current Population Survey and the Common Core of Data

In the short term, Resource Group 2 recommended oversampling minorities within the Current Population Survey (CPS); assessing the undercount of poor and minority households in the CPS; aligning definitions and items between the CPS and the Common Core of Data (CCD) of the National Center on Education Statistics; checking the accuracy of self-reports in the CPS; and encouraging states to use common definitions of the terms "graduate," "dropouts," and "students."

Long-Term System Improvement: National Student Data Reporting System

For the long term, The Resource Group recommended that a national student data reporting system be developed. A small core of common items would be universally collected, permitting information on student enrollment to be tracked across state and district lines. Additional information could be elaborated at the building level to enable school staff to make better decisions about matching students to courses, educational programs, and social or health services.

Extent of Testimony

Goal 2 (on School Completion) received modest public attention and testimony, both at the public forums (42) and in written testimony (69). Public testimony on the proposed national Student Data Reporting System was not extensive. The testimony offered focused more on the importance of the goal than on the selection or development of indicators. Indeed, considerable testimony advocated spending money on programs to reach the goal in preference to further attempts to measure it.

Support

Some support was offered for the proposed student data system as a way to get more accurate information on the extent of the dropout problem.

Concerns

Many felt that is more important to prevent dropouts than to improve statstical information about their numbers. The Resource Group suggested that a national student data reporting system could serve as an early warning of potential dropouts so that preventative services could be targeted toward the right population. Testimony indicated that most thought the proposed national student data system would improve the accuracy of counts of dropouts, but did not believe it would directly help in assigning potential dropouts to services. Most testimony supported collecting data on the prevalence of factors predicting dropouts and the effectiveness of prevention programs.

Suggested Alternatives or Refinements

Testimony proposed several types of alternative indicators. Some suggested collecting data pertaining to programs or schools rather than individual students. Among these were graduation and dropout rates by public/private school type; the availability and effects of prevention programs within the school; class size, staff training, and parental involvement.

In reporting individual student data, testimony advocated collecting two types of data. The first type of data related to breaking out specific demographic characteristics of dropouts, such as gender, family income, reasons for leaving school, immigrant status, and Native American and Asian categories among the other racial/ethnic groups.

The second type of student data recommended related to specific characteristics that predict dropping out. Among these were working part-time, owning a car, being held back or retained in school, failing to enroll in a new school after a geographic move, and the feelings and attitudes of dropouts toward school and toward GED or adult education alternatives.

Sample Comments and Quotations

- "The interim improvements to data collection recommended by Resource Group 2 are timely and reasonable. It is critical that we collect data that is truly representative of the current status of our student population. This will facilitate the development of appropriate models and strategies to meet their educational needs. The development of the Long-Term System Improvements such as a national student data reporting system is a logical follow-up..."
(Debra Houston, Maine Association of Directors of Services to Exceptional Children)

- "I agree that the Current Population Survey and Common Core of Data should be upgraded. I would rely on these enhanced databases to provide the school completion estimates we seek in future years. As a measure of our success in improving completion rates, an **estimate** of completion rates at the national and state level should be sufficient.

  "I would **not** invest in yet another national database... Instead of investing time and money in an elaborate national data system, I would concentrate scarce dollars on creating the conditions that enable schools to meet this goal...

  "National databases can't provide us much information about what works -- how programmatic factors related to student outcomes."
(Larry Guthrie, Far West Laboratory)

- "We need to ask ourselves how this data will help America... Will we be drowning in a sea of data or will we be able to make a difference? We say that the data will help us make decisions about addressing the needs of students, but are the data significant if we don't also show how (school) practices lead to (student) outcomes?... A systems design needs to be created to better integrate local, state, and national goals, implementation, and evaluation." (Karen S. Agello, Superintendent, Clarement, New Hampshire)

- "The emphasis on measuring people with a High School Credential (including a GED) is fine but why are we compiling that data?... (T)he National Goals, particularly the one on dropouts, must have been decided based on data already collected and evident... (Future) data should be collected on measurable action steps to remediate the problems about which we know volumes and not on finely tuned research models."
(Noreen O'Connor, Vermont Council on Vocational-Technical Education)

- "(I)t may be more important to spend time determining the reasons for dropping out instead of the actual numbers (of dropouts.) The important thing is to have reasons so that programs could be developed to reduce the rate, whatever it is."
(Dan G. Lunsford, Superintendent, Hendersonville, North Carolina)

- "The data collection section is missing indicators on what schools are doing to retain their students. What factors in the school-based community alienate students and what proactive steps are being taken to make schools a more welcoming place for everyone?...

  (I)n creating a national student data system we recommend that the panel ensure the right to privacy around issues related to health, family circumstance, etc. Data from a national student ID system should be reported only in the aggregate." (Ellen J. Vargyas, National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education)

Public Testimony on Proposed Future Indicators: Goal 3, Student Achievement and Citizenship

The Resource Group for Goal 3 recommended the development of national standards and a national system of student assessment as indicators of student achievement for future reports of progress towards the national education goals.

Proposed Future Indicators: National Standards and Student Assessment System

On an interim basis, the Resource Group recommended increasing the use of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on representative student samples more often and in more subject areas.

In the long term, the Resource Group recommended developing national education standards and a national system of student assessment. First, they recommended developing national education standards about what students should learn and be able to do. These standards would entail both the level and substance of what students should learn in the "core subjects" of English, mathematics, science, history and geography. Second, they recommended developing a national system of assessments of whether students met the national standards. The system would not entail a single federally-developed national test. Rather, it would involve clusters of state-developed tests which could be calibrated to the national standards, possibly through the use of a national "anchor" exam.

This national assessment system would probably incorporate, at least in some clusters, increased use of performance assessments geared to assess higher critical thinking skills, the "big ideas" underlying the academic disciplines, and the ability to integrate knowledge to solve complex, real world problems. The subject matter to be covered and scoring criteria would be public knowledge. There would be important consequences for employment and college admission linked to student test performance. Finally, the examination system would be one to which teachers would be encouraged to teach and for which students would be encouraged to study.

Extent of Testimony

The proposals to define national standards and a national system of assessment were the centerpiece of public testimony. Introductory remarks at each regional education forum focused attention upon these proposals. There were 96 pieces of oral testimony and 207 pieces in writing, more testimony than for any other single topic.

Support

The proposal to set national educational standards met with almost universal support. There was very little testimony in favor of a single national test or a national curriculum. Testimony strongly supported the development of national education standards because it was perceived to meet a critical national need to raise the expectations for academic performance of all students. Testimony typically did not differentiate standards of how much students should know, from standards of what substance they should know. Widespread support for students knowing "more" included people with a variety of opinions about "what" students should know. Additionally, the proposal that clusters of states could develop tests that vary satisfactorily addressed the concern that the new assessment system allow for diversity of approaches.

There was broad interest in the subject of assessment and in improving assessment tools, and support for aligning assessment with the new national standards. The overwhelming majority of testimony assumed that changes in assessment would be linked to the new standards. There was widespread, but not universal, support for the development of new assessments sensitive to critical thinking skills, important ideas, and the ability to integrate knowledge in solving real world problems. Some testimony supported such innovations as central to measuring the new national standards. These persons generally saw serious shortcomings to multiple choice exams. They recognized the early stage of development of other assessment techniques (including teachers scoring group work or portfolios of student work) and they generally supported federal financing of some of the developmental costs.

Concerns

Although generally supportive of the need for national standards and assessment, there was expressed concern that those proposals could encroach upon the tradition of local control and compromise professional autonomy and site-based management. Concern was expressed that local variation of curriculum and programs be permitted. A few were so concerned they opposed the national assessment system. More often, people expressed concern but believed the tension between national standards and local control could be resolved.

People had concrete concerns about assessment. Most wanted tests more sensitive to critical thinking skills and expressed dissatisfaction with perceived shortcomings of multiple choice testing. On the one hand, these perceived shortcomings lead many to welcome the development of new, more authentic performance tests. On the other hand, they saw high costs in time, money and effort in developing new tests, and the possibility that problems of reliability and validity might not be solved even if those costs were undertaken. One large group was seriously concerned that without such new tests the system of assessment would not be aligned with the new standards they wanted. Another large group (including those with a great deal of technical expertise in testing) was equally seriously concerned that the scientific basis for creating authentic performance exams does not now exist. They feared

feared the nation could begin to implement tests whose reliability and validity were not established only to discover later a host of very serious technical problems that would discredit the results. Some testimony expressed concern that there would be a press for a "quick fix" for a topics whose sound solution could only be long-term and complex.

Other voiced concerns about the use of assessment results. People frequently expressed the view that assessment would and should be used for both accountability and instructional improvement, but some feared the same instrument could not be appropriately used for both purposes. People tended to think that tests used for purposes of program accountability should be given to a sample of students, and tests to improve instruction or inform and motivate students, their parents and teachers must be given to all students. Educators expressed deep concern that results would be used to make unfair comparisons. This fear was heightened by the Panel's focus upon outcome measures in the absence of attention to context or resources. Some feared the assessment process would be used to blame schools and evade the accountability of federal and state government for offering needed programs and resources.

Some people feared that we already had too much testing and did not believe more testing would help the nation improve student achievement. Opinion was divided about whether new performance assessments would help change instruction, but there was consensus that more of the same type of testing we now have would not improve instruction.

Suggested Alternatives or Refinements

There was a general interest in improving assessment by relying less on multiple choice questions and increasing the number of open-ended performance questions. General agreement was expressed to seek more open-ended assessments of "big ideas," critical thinking, and the ability to integrate knowledge to solve real world problems. Concern was expressed that multiple choice items tended to decontextualize information and test the recall of factual "sound bites" in isolation.

Other suggested alternatives or refinements suggested did not cluster on specific proposals. Some assumed the new system of assessment would be based upon or similar to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and proposed creating a national item bank of NAEP-like items. Many requested detailed breakouts of assessment results by race, ethnicity and gender. Some strongly recommended either sampling or universal testing, a topic that inspired both attention and confusion.

Sample Comments and Quotations

- "The interim report recommends an assessment system which not only provides a measure of accountability, or of how well the overall education system is working, but also provides a method of individual assessment. These two different purposes of testing have different bases (in particular sampling methods) for test construction, and developing tests which serve such diverse purposes is virtually uncharted territory...

  "(T)he standards are the most important aspect of the whole enterprise. The rest simply will (with a lot of hard work) fall into place if the standards can be clearly defined. The concern here is that the assessments are being made more central than the standards."

  (Wayne J. Camara, American Psychological Association)

- "(W)e come to you with support for the use of a national assessment system with strong emphasis on the word system... We strongly support basing examinations on national standards. It is sound scientific practice that any assessment be based on predetermined goals. Our concerns are based on what is known, proven, and accepted technology in psychometrics.... Any method of assessment must be thoroughly researched and developed, with proven reliability and validity."

  (Ronda C. Talley, American Psychological Association)

- "Measuring progress toward the goal and objectives will require assessment procedures far beyond a multiple-choice test -- whether paper and pencil or computer is the medium. Measuring students' capacity to "use their minds well" calls for innovative approaches not now commonly in use... Further, the assessment system must include recognition of the context in which children learn."

  (John M. Yarnovic, Pennsylvania State Education Association)

- "The national assessment system recommended by this Resource Group may possibly hold greater promise than other options currently being promoted (eg, a single national test) for leveraging positive change in state and local curriculums around the country. However, the real challenge is to identify practices, resources, and policies which will result in increased student learning."

  (Debra DeLee, National Education Association, Washington, DC)

- "The American Library Association strongly recommends that any assessment of achievement measure not only what students know, but also how well they can find, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and ideas... Any assessment of progress toward the Goal must include evaluation of the ability of schools and public libraries to provide the range of materials and services needed by students to excel in mathematics, science, English, history, and geography."

  (Linda Crismond, Executive Director, American Library Association)

- "The New Jersey School Boards Association believes that public education in America is the shared responsibility of the state and local boards of education. The national assessment process should not upset that balance. National exams designed to measure achievement toward goal 3 should not infringe on the flexibility of state and local boards of education to set their own performance goals and the development of curricula to address them. National standards for student achievement in specific subject areas should be carefully developed with input from the states. A national standards panel should be created and should include representatives from school 19 board members, school administrators, teachers, and parents. Most importantly, additional data collection and testing should not place excessive burden on local school systems and adversely affect students."
(Mario J. Gangi, President, New Jersey School Boards Association)

- "You have undertaken a great task by deciding what is important for educational success in this country. I only ask, as you consider all the testimony and letters, that you think about the inductive possibilities in schools; about the beginnings of assessments, evaluation, and achievement that enable what is possible rather than grades what is done; that supports what could happen rather than measures what has happened. A system of formative, context-specific state and local evaluations may be more costly in the short run, but in the long run they would support the loftiest of educational goals."
(Judith M Meloy, Castleton VT State College)

- "Development of (student performance) standards must be seen as a careful, open, and democratic process... To be widely accepted, the development of standards must foster widespread discussion among the public and the education profession... While the act of developing national standards should not imply the necessity or desirability of national exams, standards must be in place before national assessment can be developed...

  "Performance-based (student exams and) assessment methods must be widely introduced throughout the US education system as fast as practical, primarily at the classroom level to assist individual students and teachers. However, we simply do not know whether it is educationally, administratively, and financially feasible to connect all these assessments -- not just exams, but products of continuing work -- to common standards and thus to each other."
(Cinthia Schuman and Monty Neill, FairTest, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

- "The national educational accountability system should focus on gains rather than levels of student achievement...Current technologies for performance assessment are inadequate to fulfill requirements for a national assessment system... A national assessment system must have calibrated item banks to simultaneously accommodate variations and produce comparable results across time, space, and student differences."
(Walter E. Hathaway, Portland OR Public Schools)

- "(T)he driving motivation behind any assessment should be for purposes of educational improvement and not to provide competitive comparisons among schools, districts, and states... The creation of yet another test without careful, deliberate thought on consensus of a curriculum framework from all participants administering the test and a carefully constructed design which incorporates performance-based assessments as well as higher level thinking skills will be just another repeat of tests already in existence. Procedures for assessing this goal should receive careful thought and ample time and not be subject to quick fixes in order to produce a test. Multiple ways of measuring achievement should be an inherent part of this goal."
(Joseph J. Marinelli, Superintendent, Livonia MI Public Schools)

- "Allowing states or clusters of states to develop shared curriculum frameworks and examinations is a major first step forward toward developing a set of national goals and expectations.

  "The federal NAEP system of reporting precludes the reporting of results for individual students. Therefore, the testing time spent is virtually nonproductive for local school purposes. Unless reporting is provided for individual students, this type of assessment would become an "overlay" system of "additional" evaluation that would have little real value beyond political satisfaction.

  "Assessments of students with projects and portfolios should remain in the domain of the classroom teacher until the issues of comparability, reliability, and bias are addressed."
(Evie G. Dennis, Superintendent, Denver CO Public Schools)

- "Assessment must play a crucial role in the improvement of our educational process. In fact, assessment must be integrally associated with the teaching/learning experience... Any assessment must be authentic and relevant to the teacher and child...

  "Any national examination system will ensure a major effort by local educators, particularly the classroom teacher, to adjust curriculum and teaching strategies to match the national test, and consequently, ignore prioritizing curriculum and teaching strategies to the local situation. The result will be a national curriculum.

  "(A) standardized national assessment system may not result in high standards of excellence. In fact, state mandated assessments have resulted in many teachers modifying their teaching strategies to concentrate on the minimal criteria necessary to "pass the test." Such test-induced teaching changes are detrimental to the goal of improving our educational system."
(Michael P. Malone, Ft. Wayne IN Community Schools)

- "I remain concerned about a national testing program that publishes results in fairly gross numbers resulting in what could be erroneous misdirected publicity on behalf of a school district. I also remain concerned about the concept of a narrowed, focused curriculum."
(Percy Clark, Jr., Lawrence IN Township)

- "(A)llow states or clusters of states to develop shared curriculum frameworks and exams -- with the state or cluster exams calibrated to a national "anchor" exam... State or regional exams will help preserve local autonomy and avoid the creation of a national curriculum.

  "To develop the testing system, the states and a national board together would create national achievement standards in various basic subjects... Parents in any stat would be able to tell how their children compare to those elsewhere.

  The federal government should pay for the development and administration of the national "anchor" exams... and for the development of state/regional assessments." (Maxine Frost, Board President, Riverside, California)

- "We urge the Panel not to use multiple- choice, standardized tests in any way to measure readiness for school or student achievement."
  (Joan Harris, The New York Public Interest Research Group)

Public Testimony on Proposed Future Indicators: Goal 4, Science and Mathematics

The Resource Group for Goal 4 recommended the following improvements in the indicators of mathematics and science achievement to be used in future reports of progress towards the goals.

Proposed Future Indicators

Resource Group 4 recommended continued and enhanced participation in the International Assessment of Educational Progress (IAEP) and the International Assessment of Educational Achievement (IEA) and the continued use of NAEP. They also recommended the collection of information on policies and use of state curriculum standards and professional teaching standards, tracing state and local financial investments in science and math, and new research and development initiatives.

Extent of Testimony

A moderate amount of testimony (47 orally and 84 in writing) were submitted on Goal 4, on Mathematics and Science Achievement.

Support

Most testimony recognized the need to compete in an international economy and therefore acknowledged the appropriateness of comparing the performance of American students to students in other countries. The IEA and IAEP were generally regarded as appropriate tools for making such international comparisons.

Those most eager for the Panel and nation to focus on programs and resources to meet the goals supported the Resource Group recommendation of reporting on financial resources invested in mathematics and science.

Concerns

Testimony reflected a particular interest in the teaching and assessment of higher order thinking skills. Those testifying expressed reservations about the current widespread use of multiple choice tests. They feared multiple choice items reward recall of isolated facts, and do not demand or encourage integrating and applying big ideas and large junks of related information. Aware of work to reform and restructure the curriculum in science and

mathematics, those testifying expressed concern that the Panel could subvert reforms by focusing upon assessment too soon and failing to develop assessments that reflect new definitions of how the subject matter should be taught.

Several people testifying on Goal 4 were concerned about the technical fairness of the comparisons between American students and those in other countries. They feared that other countries might have sorted able students into high school science and math classes that would be unfair to compare with more heterogenous classes of American students.

Suggested Alternatives or Refinements

There were few alternative measures suggested. Those offered did not cluster on one topic. One suggested tracking the number of science courses completed by graduating seniors prior to the end of high school. Another suggested reporting the quality and number of presentations at such events as International Science and Engineering Fairs, Olympics of the Mind, and International Physics Olympics.

Sample Comments and Quotations

- "Science is not a set of facts to be learned but a process of inquiry about the world around us... Students must experience at an early age the inquiry of science in the study of the world..., not study about science and be tested solely on learned fact...

  "We therefore have considerable concern relating to the apparent primary role of tests and assessment in achieving Goal 4. Assessment is a tool, not a solution... One does not want assessment to be the driver of curricular reform, but rather curricular reform should lead to the evolution of appropriate assessment tools. Unless we are successful in broadly implementing experientially based science teaching and learning (particularly at the elementary level), Goal 4 is unlikely to be achieved, regardless of the most sophisticated assessment methods."
  (Gordon L. Nelson, Committee on Mathematics and Science Education, Council of Scientific Society Presidents)

- "(W)e must register profound concern about any international ranking or comparisons that do not control for the inevitable cultural and socioeconomic differences that exist between a typical American high school class and that of a country in which tracking might effectively pre-select those students included in the testing pool."
  (Barbara T. Jackson, (Washington) D.C. Public Schools)

- "In other countries a significant portion of the total population is siphoned off around the age of 14, leaving a selected group of academically talented students to continue on to schools which are the equivalent of our high school. Manifestly, to compare our total high school graduating population with the population of a country which goes through (such) a selection process has little value... If we compare our graduates with those of another nation, we should compare those among our students who correspond as a sample with the high school graduates of the country..."
  (Phillip F Flaherty, Principal, Westwood MA High School)

- "NEA (the National Education Association) congratulates this Resource Group in calling for an examination of important contextual data in the math and science areas. The Resource Group recognizes that goal-setting must be followed by a discussion of the strategic components required for us to strengthen mathematics and science education... We further commend the Resource Group for 1) calling for the disaggregation of data by gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, primary language, and disabling conditions; 2) their endorsement of authentic assessment techniques; and 3) their call for a significant amount of preservice and inservice training to increase teacher and administrator understanding of... more sophisticated assessment techniques."
  (Debra DeLee, National Education Association, Washington, DC)

- "(T)he students who score well on achievement tests are not always the best students. A performance based testing component (addressed under Future Annual Progress Reports) should be part of the overall assessment. There are numerous events where student performance can be observed... The quality and numbers of the presentations at these events would be a measurable item related to science achievement."
(Rudolf H. Timmerman, President, Arkansas Science Teachers Association)

- "(A) careful look at the how well students show the ability to reason, solve problems, apply knowledge, and write and communicate effectively should be taken... Evaluating thinking skills along with the number of degrees in science and mathematics will help determine the quality as well as quantity of graduates."
(Jennie S. Hautala, Student, University of Puget Sound)

- "We strongly support the comparison of US students with those of other countries... (T)he Progress Report should include measures of the substantive backgrounds of teachers... (T)eachers must be prepared to take periodic exams to retest their knowledge, and to measure their knowledge of recent advancements in their science."
(Carol Anne Yoon, United Parents for Education Coalition)

- "Clearly the Panel has made assessment of progress its number one goal. Its aim to improve education, I fear, may be in jeopardy because of its focus on this goal. Progress can be measured only after a clear course of action is agreed upon, developed, nurtured, and funded."
(Robert Holl, Scott Foresman Publishers, Illinois)

- "If we are to compare ourselves with other nations..., a standard international test must be used. A testing system such as the International Assessment of Educational Progress (IAEP) could be used... "(Nationally) a comprehensive written test should be developed to further analyze students' critical thinking skills and understanding of science."
(David B Reeder, Colorado Springs, Colorado)

- "(Maine's) approach of tieing together ideas (from science and social studies) matches closely with AAAS's Project 2061: Science for All Americans. Current national assessment techniques do not evaluate student abilities in this way, but isolate ideas and concepts (into)... sound bites...

  "By using multiple choice type techniques of assessment we are limiting ourselves to (assessing) specific factual content... As science curriculum changes and the assessment does not, no matter how strong the changes (in curriculum) are, teachers will return to teach to the tests. I implore you to look at and for possible integrated (assessment) techniques."
(Francis Eberle, President, Maine Science Teachers Association)

Public Testimony on Proposed Future Indicators: Goal 5, Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning

The Resource Group for Goal 5 recommended the following improvements in the indicators of adult literacy and lifelong learning to be used in future reports of progress towrd the national educational goals.

Proposed Future Indicators

Resource Group 5 recommended in the future strengthening and expanding use of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, and the creation of target scores for NALS performance. They also recommended that the Panel consider use of data produced by the (Labor) Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), surveying public and employer opinion, and monitoring student enrollment and progress in postsecondary education. They pointed out that to assess college graduates ability to think critically and solve problems one would have to create a new kind of assessment.

Extent of Testimony

While 38 persons testified orally and 93 in writing on Goal 5, Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning, very little testimony related to proposed future indicators. The following information reports incidents rather than patterns of support or concern. Almost 100 individuals from colleges or universities gave written testimony on one or more of the goals, but their testimony did not relate to the issues of assessing the skills of college graduates.

Support

Neither strong support nor concern was expressed about the recommendations of Resource Group 5, although most testimony strongly supported the goal itself.

Concerns

Several expressed concern that workplace literacy skills be accurately identified to allow both programs and assessments to be linked to an accurate understanding of literacy needs. Some saw a need for a thorough rethinking of how students make the transition from school to work and how the education and training system can operate to improve the transition. These people felt the recommendations of Resource Group 5 fell short of the need to reexamine this transition in the depth they considered necessary.

Suggested Alternatives or Refinements

Testimony included varied suggested alternatives regarding adult education but focused little attention on issues of higher education. Several suggested assessing the business communities' need to employ workers who speak foreign languages and understand foreign cultures in order to operate in the global economy. Others were interested in reconceptualizing the transition from school to work and finding better measures of the success with which individuals make this transition.

Other individual comments included one who wanted to know what percent of adults seeking adult education were enrolled in such programs. Another suggested collecting data on the availability of adult education and training offered by employers, post-secondary education institutions, state and federal government, and others. A librarian suggested assessing adults' ability to locate and use information appropriately. Someone else suggested assessing knowledge of economics as central to attaining the goal. Another suggested that seventh grade literacy be assessed to gauge the skills of students before most students begin dropping out of school.

Sample Comments and Quotations

- "(T)he single most important statistic which must be gathered, if we are to raise the standard of literacy of the entire nation, is the degree to which available adult literacy programs parallel demands for such programs. In other words, how many illiterate adult Americans who wish to learn to read are able to access a publicly-funded literacy program?"
(Jane R. Stern, MD State Teachers Association)

- "As far as measuring literacy and establishing levels of knowledge and skills, I concur with the recommendation of the Resource Group to rely on the National Adult Literacy survey (NALS). I would go further, as suggested by my remarks on Mississippi's assessment and say that there should be clear linkage between the NALS and the SCANS project; identifying entry-level skills for jobs ought to be tied to some measurement scale that then can be used to assess the job-readiness of the potential workforce. Such measurement ought to be anchored in criterion-referenced, job task analyses and norm-referenced proficiency levels of workers performing in those jobs.

  "Knowing how difficult this linkage between NALS and SCANS might be... makes me hesitant about the need for comparing the American workforce with those of other nations. At least in the near term, I think we ought to better understand the factors involved in the American school-to-work connection so that we can build strategies that may be unique to our respective states even while establishing uniform standards."
(Karl O. Haigler, Governor's Office for Literacy, Mississippi)

- "We would recommend the undertaking of a national survey of business needs in foreign language and cross-cultural competencies to give us a more quantitative, objective perspective (on an appropriate definition of adult literacy in the global economy). In consort with that survey, an assessment of the demand and availability of foreign language programs for adults in the private sector would be very useful..."
(Wendy Redlinger, The Experiment in International Living)

- "There is no objective for Goal 5 that relates to the role of foreign culture even though the importance of this knowledge is specifically stated in the goal... A survey of business should be conducted to determine what foreign language knowledge and skills are necessary to compete in a global economy."
(Jeanne Wells Cox, Mississippi State Department of Education)

- "Goal 5... fails to address the role of second language ability or knowledge of other cultures in competing in a global economy. Data needs to be collected to determine the demand for second language ability and international knowledge in the business community. Only then will we have a true picture of how necessary these skills are to compete in a global economy."
(Ronie R. Webster, Massachusetts Foreign Language Association)

- "(A)dditional indicators for measuring progress (on Goal 5 should include):
  * Current status of Adult Education Departments within each state;
  * Changes in educational opportunities (new state sponsored programs) related to the Family Support Act of 1988;
  * the types of family literacy programs in states as a result of state or federal initiatives; certification requirement for adult education teachers;
  * the types of post-secondary education opportunities available for non-traditional students through the private sector or higher education;and/or
  * a listing of workplace literacy initiatives by the states major employers.

  If we expect every adult American to be literate by the year 2000, we must begin to provide opportunities for lifelong learning that meet the needs of a diverse population. One strategy to begin this task is to acquire a picture of services currently in place in order to identify current strengths and weaknesses. How else will we know how to retool... this segment of our educational system for the next century?"
  (Diane D'Angelo, RMC Corporation)

- "I support the recommendation for future data that calls for surveying the types of adult education programs offered by libraries, postsecondary institutions, and others."
  (Peggy O'Dell Gonder, consultant, Colorado)

- "(W)e should be measuring information literacy. Can people locate the information they need when they need it? Can they use information tools critical to success, such as computer databases, libraries, and so forth?"
  (Elaine M. Albright, Director of Libraries, University of Maine)

- "All too often existing workplace education and training programs enroll disproportionately few women, and do not provide them with higher skills training. We therefore urge that surveys on workers' participation in education and training sponsored by employers programs be designed to show whether workplace programs allow for equitable participation of women, especially women of color."
  (Ellen J. Vargyas, National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education)

- "Since many of my students dropped out of school at the 8th or 9th grade level, I suggest that some measurement be used in 7th grade to determine the number of at-risk or semi-literate students."
  (Dede Nelson, Des Moines Iowa YWCA)

Public Testimony on Proposed Future Indicators: Goal 6, Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-free Schools

The Resource Group for Goal 6 recommended the following improvements in the indicators of safe, disciplined and drug-free schools to be used in future reports of progress toward the goals.

Proposed Future Indicators

Resource Group 6 recommended continued use and expansion of two existing data sources for future annual progress reports: Monitoring the Future (a student survey with extensive trend data) conducted for the National Institute of Drug Abuse and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), conducted for the Centers for Disease Control. They recommended adding items to these surveys to collect data on being under the influence of drugs at school, sale or distribution of drugs at school, and crime, victimization, and school safety. Resource Group 6 also recommended the development of a detailed technical report, encouragement of good local data collection, and certain "super" indicators, such as parental involvement and
and student attendance and engagement with school.

Extent of Testimony

Surprisingly little testimony (38 orally, and 64 in writing) was offered on future indicators for Goal 6, given the importance that parents and the public associate with this goal in national polls. Testimony that focused on future indicators proposed alternatives rather than comment upon the Resource Group recommendations.

Support

Testimony did not reflect strong support or concerns regarding the proposed future indicators.

Concerns

Some concern was expressed for elements perceived to be left out of the recommended future indicators, including: drug use in elementary schools, a broad definition of drugs, and concern for the safety and well-being of children off the school grounds.

Suggested Alternatives or Refinements

Some testimony recommended the inclusion of indicators of the prevalence of comprehensive drug-prevention programs and school/community teams to implement them. It was recommended that to gauge the presence of a comprehensive program data be collected about drug education and awareness, a two-tiered disciplinary and referral track drug policy, an open school climate that permits discussion and requests for help, support groups for users, non-users, and the recovering, curriculum, staff development, and drug-free adult models. Others recommended reporting drug use, or its predictors, in elementary school.

Sample Comments and Quotations on Goal 6

- "We find this Group's report to be very well thought out, reflecting the complexity of this issue and its interrelationship with other school climate and structural issues. However, there are several elements which should be considered for inclusion in the Panel's report which are addressed in the following resource index:..." (which includes comprehensive K–12 educational programs, treatment programs, tracking suspension by gender and race, availability of in–house suspension programs; and peer mediation and conflict resolution programs.)
(Debra DeLee, National Education Association)

- "The definition of drug–free should include all drugs that are illegal for school–age children... That would include tobacco products, alcohol, and steroids as well as illegal use of (other) substances... Assessment of student and faculty perceptions about school safety should be an integral part of the evaluation process... A disciplined environment conducive to learning includes not only an absence of disruptive behavior but also an attitude of caring and mutual respect that provides a nurturing environment."
(Lois Teesdale, Executive Editor, Scott Foresman)

- "I suggest that the condition of being drug–free must apply to all children, regardless of time or place. For us to advocate less implies that incidents off campus or weekends are acceptable behaviors and fosters the negative message associated with the "Michelob weekend." I also believe that school safety must extend beyond the school campus and should include verbal as well as physical violence, prevalent among today's peer groups. Finally, I question the use of the terms "safe haven;" while the intent is clear to anyone, the implication is that the national government is neither willing nor committed to addressing the same problems off the school grounds."
(David Allen, KY Education Association)

- "We found it troubling and odd that the indicators for drug use do not include an elementary component. It seems to us that the most impressionable population of students is being ignored and we need to gather information on that group..."
(Charles R. Hilston, Association of WI School Administrators)

- "I, and other representatives of the District of Columbia, speak to you about a school system's response to the encroachment of street violence onto our playgrounds and into out schools... In the absence of much greater specification than exists in the indicators as they are currently written, reported progress on any of the (proposed) items will, of necessity, be too subjective to be either valid or reliable...

  "We would be firmly opposed to the establishment of any indicators of progress (such as self–reported drug use) toward the stated goal that relied upon data that is unverifiable, or may represent only partial or selective reporting."
(R. David Hall, D.C. Public Schools, Washington, DC)

- "Models exist for state-wide data collection systems (in Louisiana, Georgia, and Florida) that have demonstrated how local school-based surveys can provide accurate, reliable, and cost-effective information for use at local school, school system, and state levels. Quality survey data are not the exclusive domain of national federally funded projects."
  (Ronald D. Adams, National Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education, Inc.)

- "Perceptions and feelings about individual... safety by both students and staff members should be assessed along with the statistical data about violent and/or criminal incidents occurring within schools.

  In New Jersey data on violence, vandalism and substance use is collected at the local level and aggregated annually at the state level for each school district as required by state law. National assessment techniques should build upon our existing databases rather than create new reporting mechanisms."
  (Mario J. Gangi, president, New Jersey School Boards Association)

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